

William Davis History

(see also Documentation section)

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William D. Parker (1921-1991)

REMINISCENCES OF THE LONG JOURNEY FROM ENGLAND TO "THE  
VALLEY" IN THE SIXTIES

Written for the Deseret News January 3, 1920 By Robert  
Aveson, Of Salt Lake City, Utah

William Davis 0011

(2)

Elizabeth Noyes Hope  
Mary Goddard (Collins) - widow  
of John Collins Jr.

No doubt the pioneers of early days who gaze on the above engraving will be reminded of reminiscences, when they traveled by ox team from the frontier to these valleys of the mountains.

It will also bring to their memories the happy hours spent around the camp fires, when they sang spiritual and sentimental songs and chatted of by-gone days and future hopes; and how, in troublesome times, they watched, with eager eyes, for Indian attacks; and through the night listened with keen ears to the howling of wild animals.

Recently I conversed with some of the pioneers who came to Utah in the early sixties, in regard to their experiences while crossing the plains. In my research I found 1 interesting but sad story. My informant belonged to the same conference, and resided not many miles away from the family referred to in my story; also sailed on the same ship, traveled with them by rail to the frontier, and was assigned to the same wagon crossing the plains.

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#### THE STORY OF THE DAVIS FAMILY

In the year 1864, in the county of Wiltshire, there resided an honest, industrious man, named William Davis and his faithful wife. Their family consisted of four<sup>5</sup> children--two boys and two girls. Bro. Davis and wife were staunch members of the Church of Jesus Christ Of Latter Day Saints, and through their frugal savings procured sufficient means to emigrate to the frontier from where the Saints crossed the plains. The time for them to leave drew near, so they sold their furniture and prepared for their journey to Utah. Just before leaving they were invited to spend a day or two with relatives, a few miles from their home. They had secured berths on the sailing vessel "Hudson" which was to sail the latter part of May that year. While on their visit word came from headquarters of the Mission at Liverpool that the date of sailing of the ship was postponed a few days later. This made their visit longer. The change of the date seemed somewhat unfortunate, although it might have been for the best. Their youngest child was taken sick, and the afternoon before thier departure, the child died. The work was somewhat perplexing, as they could not remain for the funeral and be in time for departure of the ship. They had secured berths on the vessel, and the ship would not wait for them. So they had to arrange with their relatives to have the child buried.

That evening they completed, as best they could, the funeral arrangements. and you can judge how little sleep the parents had that night.

Next morning they were up early. The mother was heart-broken; the father was very sad, and the other children were full of grief. The time was right at hand when they had to say farewell to the dead babe and their relatives. With tears in her eyes Sister Davis knelt down by the side of the remains of her beloved child and kissed its little cheeks and hands.

As the time was drawing near for their departure on the train, Bro. Davis leaned down to his wife, kissed her and said:

"Come, my dear girl, this is a hard trial, but we must go. We have done all we can for the dear little child."

They gave a parting kiss to the babe, bid good-bye to their relatives and started for the boat.

Davis Family (Continued)

Nebraska

1864

After a voyage of six weeks and four days, they landed safely in New York, July 19, and then proceeded on their journey by rail, reaching the village of Wyoming-- the frontier, August 2nd of that year. Nothing of importance transpired on their journey so far. They were just beginning to recover from their feelings of sadness through the loss of their dear child, when after traveling on the plains a few ~~days~~, another sad affliction came in their pathway.

Comforts in those days on long journeys were very few, luxuries were hardly thought of. When sickness came, they could not run to a doctor or to a drug store. It required great faith for even the hardy and strong to pass through prairie life hardships. The bread was cooked in a bake skillet on a fire made of buffalo chips, brush and limbs of trees. Such was camp life. There were many sore trials and troubles on the way.

Poor William Davis. Serious illness overtook his partner in life, an attack of dysentery; which only lasted a few days. The trial was hard when parting from their little child, but it was a sore trial indeed to see his beloved wife in the throes of death. He did all that was possible to aid and assist in her dying condition. Some of the sisters from nearby camp wagons volunteered their service, but she was too weak--too far gone for him to help her. *she died 13 Aug 1864*

What made matters worse, his youngest boy was also sick with the same disease, and the father little thought he was so seriously ill. The boy was laid down in another part of the wagon, and in a faint voice whispered as loud as he could: "Daddy, Daddy."

The grief-stricken father went to his assistance and leaning over him, said: "What do you want, ~~Benny~~?" Whispering in his father's ear, he said: "I want some soup daddy." Lay still, my boy for a little while, and daddy will bring you some." Brother Davis then turned his attention to his sick wife, who, in a low toned voice, said to him. "I feel I am going to leave you, William; take care of the children." "OH, ~~Nell~~, don't talk like that, what can I do without you? He then prayed for her. At the end of his prayer, he turned toward his beloved wife and she was breathing her last breath. It was an awfully sad scene. William was broken hearted; his other two children were present, the tears rolling down their cheeks.

*Moroni*

*Elizabeth*

That night William was so bewildered and confused through the death of his wife, that he almost forgot his darling son. But just as daylight appeared, he lit a fire and made some soup. And taking it to him, he said; "Here ~~Benny~~ is your soup." It was too late the child was in the throes of death. This was a double bereavement. Almost overcome with grief, William bowed his head down and exclaimed; "What have I done that such awful trials should befall me."

*Moroni*

Preparations were made for the burial of wife and child. They were laid side by side in one grave. The funeral service was very brief--no music, no flowers, no coffin; the bodies were wrapped in a sheet and covered with a blanket. It was an affecting scene--many eyes were wet, yes, even the eyes of stout hearts were bedimmed with tears.

"We have traveled long together,  
Hand in hand and heart in heart,  
Both through fair and stormy weather,  
And 'tis hard, 'tis hard to part."

We can imagine the feelings of a loving parent bereft of a faithful partner through life; far, far away on prairie land, a long distance from village or town.

My story is not yet completed. It was said that half the world is not aware what trials and tribulations the other half has to endure. Some days elapsed before Brother Davis began to feel in

Davis Family (Continued)

his normal condition. His two remaining children clung to him and they could have been observed marching along ahead of the train- the boy on one side of the father, the girl on the other, hand in hand.

They arrived in Great Salt Lake City the latter part of OCT. of that year (1864), and it is supposed that they went to Provo, Bro. Davis was glad to be in Zion. Figuratively speaking, he enjoyed "smooth sailing," but it was only for a brief period. Not many months passed ere he was called to endure another severe trial- his boy was accidentally drowned. The only remaining child- a girl- grew up to womanhood and was married, *First to Wm Denton Moulton & later to George Smith.*

What became of William? My informant was unable to learn of his whereabouts for the past half century. It is probable he again married and had a family for the last heard of him he was trying to find another partner through life.

"Though deep'ning trials throng your way,  
Press on, press on, ye Saints of God,  
Ere long the resurrection day  
Will spread its light and truth abroad."

MARY ANN DAVIS MOULTON SMITH, wife of WILLIAM D. MOULTON.

Her father William Davis was born in Wiltshire, England, Jan. 2nd 1830-was a citizen of Heber, Utah and died in Heber, on May 7th 1891. Her mother was (1) Elizabeth Hope, born in Wiltshire, Eng. about 1834-was a citizen of England and died in Nebraska on Aug. 13th, 1864.

My father, William Davis came directly to the Hailstone ranch now called Elkhorn in this county, where he lived practically all his life after coming to Utah. He acted as presiding Elder in that District for a number of years. He was a Veteran of the Black Hawk Indian War. The family moved to Heber for protection at that time. He took up land claim near the Hailstone Ranch and was quite successful as a farmer and stock raiser and built him a comfortable home there. Later he bought a nice home in Heber where he died. His first wife having died on the plains he married (2) Mary Goddard Collins ~~on Atlantic Ocean~~ April 10, 1865, by whom he raised a family of six children. They started from the ranch to walk to Salt Lake City to get married in the Endowment House but were overtaken by teams on the way to Conference and invited to ride. They came back and settled down on the ranch where they lived for many years.

Mary Goddard Collins, my stepmother came to Utah the same year my father did. Her husband John Collins Jr. died on the way coming to ~~Utah near Fort Bridger~~ America

Signed, Mary Ann Davis Moulton Smith.

Above is a copy of application for membership to the Society of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers.

Also, "William Davis and Mary Goddard Collins Davis were good kind hospitable people, strictly honest, peaceable, lawabiding citizens of the State of Utah and were well respected by all their neighbors.

Names of children by first marriage to Wm. D. Moulton: William Davis Moulton, born Oct. 16th, 1874. Moroni Davis Moulton, born July 26, 1876. Thomas D. Moulton, born Jan 27, 1878. Elizabeth Moulton, Born April 28, 1879. Hyrum Moulton, Born Feb. 10, 1881.

By second husband George Smith: Olive Elsie Smith born May 10, 1891. Blanche Louise Smith born Sept. 11, 1892. Luella Smith, born Mar. 17, 1894. Earl H. Smith born May 18, 1896.

Mary Ann Davis &  
Wm James Davis  
in the Provo River near  
Jordanelle 15 July  
1867  
RRG  
Corrections by RRG